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THREE LECTURES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

LECTURE I

IT is no easy task to deal briefly, and yet usefully, with such a subject as the Epistle to the Ephesians. Admirable commentaries are already provided. There is the practical exposition of Dr. Gore ; there is the larger volume of Dr. Armitage Robinson, in which in so helpful a way the exposition is separated from the main detailed notes ; there is the International Critical Commentary by Dr. Abbott. It would be useless to attempt to do again work already so excellently done.

Now, in view of this, we will deal with the Epistle in a somewhat novel way. We will reverse the usual method ; and, instead of seeking by the Epistle to understand the mind of St. Paul, we will seek by the mind of St. Paul to understand the Epistle. If this method appears to you paradoxical, will you consider the way in which you interpreted the letters upon your breakfast table this morning ? One or two perhaps were from entire strangers, and there you had nothing upon which to go except the letters themselves. But

with the majority it was otherwise. The words meant more to you than they would have meant to me; you rightly interpreted them where I should have gone astray, because you knew something of the mind and character of the writers themselves. In the case of a letter from a stranger, you begin with the letter, and pass on to the man; in the case of a letter from a friend, you begin with the man, and pass on to the letter. How then should we deal with an Epistle of St. Paul? That depends upon what he has come to be to us. If he is as yet quite a stranger, we should begin with the letter and seek to learn his mind from it; but if in some degree his mind has already become known to us, we should begin with St. Paul himself, and seek to understand his letter by our previous knowledge of him. Now our commentators adopt as a rule the former method. No doubt they often tell us a good deal about St. Paul in the introductions to their commentaries. But it is rather of the external circumstances of his life that they speak than of his inner mind; what they know of the latter comes out incidentally as the explanation of his words demands it. We shall not complain of our commentators because they adopt this method. St. Paul is at first a stranger to us, and it is chiefly by the study of his letters that we must learn to know him. But we should notice a danger which unavoidably assails us. We may interpret his words not by the ideas which were in his mind, but by the ideas which happen to be in our own. If we are Catholic Christians, we are prejudiced in St.

Paul's favour. We take for granted his "understanding in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. iii. 4), and do not willingly admit that even incidentally he may express ideas that are baseless. Moreover, since we are human beings, we are prejudiced in our own favour also; we do not willingly admit that St. Paul does not agree with us. For both reasons we are disposed to force St. Paul's mind into agreement with our own to the injury of correct interpretation. I do not know that the consequences are necessarily very serious. In so far as the Spirit has given to us the mind of Christ, we have the same mind that St. Paul had, and are far more likely to understand him than those who do not share his faith. But you will see that there is something to be said for considering the mind of St. Paul before turning to his Epistles.

I

What then do we know of the mind and outlook of St. Paul? We have here a vast subject before us, but we shall only consider it in so far as this will help us to interpret the Epistle. St. Paul was an orthodox Hebrew of the first century, who had been converted to Catholic Christianity. We shall need to remember both his old outlook and his new, if we wish to understand his words.

In the first place, then, let us take fast hold of the essentially Hebrew character of St. Paul's outlook, and not allow ourselves to be misled either by his quotations from Greek authors or by

his Roman citizenship. The characteristics of Greek, Roman, and Hebrew thought are very different, and it is quite impossible to unite them in any satisfactory way. No doubt a certain amount both of Greek philosophy and of Roman imperialism appears in certain forms of Christian theology, and it is generally believed that the Church is much indebted to the Greeks for the language and forms of thought in which important parts of her theology have come to be expressed: but it is doubtful whether the result in either case has been very satisfactory. Be this as it may, St. Paul habitually thinks as a Hebrew, and therefore not as a Greek, or as a Roman. He may have learned a good deal about Stoicism at Tarsus, but we should not interpret in a Stoic sense what is entirely susceptible of a Hebrew one. So, again, St. Paul sometimes quotes from Greek authors, but the way in which he does so does not suggest more than the most superficial acquaintance with them. The hymn of Cleanthes (Acts xvii. 28) would be known to any one who knew anything of Stoicism; the one line quoted from Menander is simply a proverbial tag (1 Cor. xv. 33); the scathing account of the Cretans given by Epimenides was one which their candid friends would not have allowed to be forgotten (Tit. i. 12). Such quotations are "learning's crumbs" indeed; they no more show real acquaintance with Greek literature than the use of a few well-worn scraps of Shakespeare would show real acquaintance with English. So, again, with St. Paul's relation to Rome. St. Paul was a Roman

citizen, and knew well how to turn the fact to account. But do not let Professor Ramsay persuade you that St. Paul was very deeply impressed by the Roman Empire, or fired by the hope of Christianising it. St. Paul, as an orthodox Hebrew of the first century, had an imperialism of his own, quite inconsistent with the Roman imperialism, and his belief that Jesus was the Christ only gave to that Hebrew imperialism a deeper hold upon his mind. He expected "the saints" to "possess the kingdom" (Dan. vii. 18), and the Christ of the Hebrews to be the head of the universe. The Empire of the Roman might have its use for the moment, but St. Paul expected it very shortly to be "taken out of the way" (2 Thess. ii. 7). He was led to his fields of labour by "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts xvi. 6, 7), and not by any strategic sense of the importance of the centres of Græco-Roman civilisation. We may indeed well believe that the Spirit of Jesus, in view of the long ages before the Church, recognised the importance of these centres, and guided St. Paul to them; but there is no real evidence that he recognised it himself. He cared for the Scythian as he cared for the Roman (Col. iii. 11), and recognised his debt to the one as fully as his debt to the other (Rom. i. 14).

Thus it is the Hebrew character of St. Paul's mind that we must remember in all our interpretation of his words. But do not let us remember this as if we needed to apologise for it. The Hebrews were a people who had been for many centuries under the training and teaching of God, as no other

people had ever been. They may have had their own weaknesses, their own prejudices, and their own illusions; but, when we find their outlook different from that of other nations, it is far more likely that they are right and others wrong than that they are wrong and others right. Especially should we remember this when we find their outlook markedly different from our own. Much water has flowed under the bridges since St. Paul's time, and spread itself into the deeps or shallows of our own thinking. Some of it has come from pure springs of knowledge unattainable by St. Paul, and we must take account of them. But some of it has come from sources much less worthy of veneration, from Greek metaphysics, from bad systems of theology, and from the popular delusions of our own age and country. The Hebrews have much to teach us, and may correct us in matters of great practical as well as of theoretical importance. To take but three examples, the characteristically Hebrew views of God, of the Christ, and of the Church, are far truer than our own; and if we can but grasp them, we shall be likely to teach our people far better than at present we do. Indeed, it is our own teaching that I shall have mainly in view. Where the outlook of St. Paul seems unlikely to be practically helpful, I shall say little about it. Satan may be "the prince of the power of the air," but we know him best as "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2). I shall therefore leave you to learn something of St. Paul's cosmology and demonology, if you wish to do so, from Mr. St.

John Thackeray's Essay,* and think of Satan simply as we know him on our own field of battle. So in other cases also. St. Paul's use of the Old Testament (*e.g.* Eph. iv. 8) may be legitimate or may be illegitimate, but nothing of importance turns for us upon what we think about it. With so eminently practical a writer, a practical aim of our own is a great help to our understanding.

But now let us turn to the other fact which we must ever remember. St. Paul had been converted to Catholic Christianity, and for him Christ had made all things new. Perhaps this may seem to you too obvious to be worth saying, but indeed it is not so; the language of scholars is sometimes thoroughly misleading here. May I insist, in the first place, that St. Paul was converted to Catholic Christianity, and did not himself invent it? Not infrequently we are told the contrary. Those who maintain that the religion of Jesus was one thing, while the religion of the Church is another, often place the blame upon St. Paul's shoulders. They recognise, to take but two examples, that the religion of St. Paul is profoundly theological and profoundly sacramental, and that, substantially at any rate, St. Paul and the Church teach the same thing. But they hold that in all this St. Paul was an innovator, and they would have us go behind him to the "simple religion" of the Lord Himself. Others regard the theology of St. Paul as something which stands more or less by itself; they think

* H. St. John Thackeray, "The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought."

of it as merely one of the many theologies which the Early Church produced. That is what is meant, when we hear the word Paulinism. Now, of course, we have no time to deal fully with such views to-day. Let it here suffice to say that the writers of the New Testament know only of one religion, and that alike the religion of Israel, the religion of the Christ Himself, and their own religion. There is, of course, fulfilment and development, but all is one continuous and self-consistent whole. St. Paul had a battle to fight for Gentile freedom ; but he fought it with the teaching of the Old Testament and of the Lord behind him and with the Twelve at his side. There is no such thing as Paulinism ; there is only Christianity. The great writers of the New Testament express their faith, each in his own way ; there is great variety in the language employed ; but they all teach the same thing. St. Paul has no other idea of his position. He is indignant that anybody should call himself " Paul's man " ; what He " delivers " is what he has " received " (1 Cor. i. 10–13 ; xi. 23 ; xv. 3 ; *cf.* Gal. ii. 2). No doubt he regards himself as the recipient of a special revelation from the Lord ; but the purpose of it has been to place him in the same situation as the other Apostles, not to carry him beyond them, or to enable him to correct them. In matters not covered by the special revelation made to him, he has received and passes on the traditions of the Church, just as others do (1 Cor. xi. 2).

And now a further point. May I ask you to accept provisionally the hypothesis, not merely that

St. Paul was no innovator, but that he knew what others knew? It is often said that St. Paul shows no interest in the earthly life and teaching of the Lord; it is the glorified Lord Who has revealed Himself to him, and St. Paul knows no other Jesus. It is even suggested that St. Paul knew practically nothing of the Lord's earthly life. The only foundation for this view, as far as I know, is that St. Paul seldom quotes our Lord's words, or refers to the actions of His earthly life. But the same thing is true of St. Peter and St. John themselves, when they write their Epistles. It is not suggested that St. Peter and St. John knew little, and cared little, about the Lord's earthly life; but they speak of it in their Epistles as little as St. Paul does. Observe why this is so. We treasure up the remembered words and actions of our great teachers, not while they are living, but after they are dead. While they are living, we are interested in what they are saying and doing now. There are many good people to-day who pore over the Synoptic Gospels precisely because they believe our Lord to be dead, and the Synoptic Gospels to give us all that is left of Him. But the Apostles believed our Lord to be living, and that not just in some far-away heaven, but here in His Church on earth. They believed the voice of His Spirit to be just as really His Voice as any utterance which the Synoptic Gospels record; they believed His present action to be as really His and much more far-reaching than any miracle of the Gospel story. They did not think that the Lord was magnificently active during the

two or three years of His ministry, but straitened since His untimely death; they knew, as He did, that He was straitened till His baptism into new life was accomplished, but magnificently active now (cf. Luke xii. 50). As a matter of fact, St. Paul probably knew a great deal more about the Lord's earthly life and teaching than any one has known since the Apostolic age. The Pharisees, to whom St. Paul belonged, paid great attention to our Lord's actions and to His teaching also; they had their own explanation of the one and strongly attacked the other; culpable inattention, as our Lord's words suggest, was the sin of the Sadducees, not of the Pharisees (John xviii. 19–21). Moreover, St. Paul, at any rate by the time at which he writes the Epistles of the Captivity, had had the fullest opportunity of conference, not only with a multitude of the witnesses of the Lord's life, but with the Twelve themselves. What shadow of a reason is there to suppose that he did not know the things in which all Christians were normally instructed? (Luke i. 1–4). But we are not left simply to our common sense. Take such a passage as 1 Thess. v. 1–11, and see how it echoes the very words of the Lord. I am not speaking of the ordinary language of Israel's religion, of such phrases as "times and seasons" or "the day of the Lord." I am speaking of such characteristic similes as those of the "thief in the night," and "travail coming upon a woman with child." St. Paul does not quote as a mere scribe might do; he writes with authority as a prophet. But we can

see that he is as familiar with the Lord's words as with the words of the Old Testament. Now I shall presuppose this in dealing with the Epistle to the Ephesians, and see what light it will throw. I shall presuppose not only that St. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and remained such even after he became convinced that Jesus was the expected Christ, but also that he was a normal Catholic Christian, and knew what others knew. The proof in both cases will lie in the light which is thus thrown upon his words, but you will, I hope, agree that my presuppositions are in no way paradoxical; it is those who adopt contrary presuppositions who are really guilty of paradox.

II

What then, let us first ask, did St. Paul as a Hebrew believe about God? God, he tells us in this Epistle, is the "one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all" (iv. 6). His Fatherhood is the archetype of all fatherhood; every other derives its right to the name from its share in the one great Fatherhood of God (iii. 15). But how had St. Paul learned this Fatherhood, and how far did he believe it to extend? The Hebrews, and St. Paul as one of them, had learned God's Fatherhood as they had learned all else about Him, from their own national experience. The Hebrews knew that God was their Father because He had shown Himself a true father to them. It had pleased the Lord to make them His people (1 Sam. xii. 22). He had brought them out of Egypt with

a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm ; He had created and maintained their national life ; He was their "Father Who had bought them" (Deut. xxxii. 6), Who had manifested the great purpose which He had for them, and even yet would realise. So it was with His attributes in detail. The Hebrews knew that God was merciful and gracious, plenteous in goodness and truth, because to them He had shown Himself to be so. They knew that He would by no means clear the guilty, because, as their national history abundantly showed, He never had cleared them. They knew that He was all-sovereign and all-wise, because they had found the powers of the universe ever at His disposal, and His wisdom never astray. That was enough. Similar conclusions might perhaps have been reached by abstract reasoning, but the *à priori* road was little trodden by the Hebrews. They did not construct cosmological, teleological, ontological, and moral arguments for the existence and attributes of God ; they were content, like the practical people that they were, to take God as they had found Him.

But now observe a consequence of this. Just because the experience upon which the Hebrews rested was a national experience, the Fatherhood in which they believed was a national rather than an universal fatherhood. That their God was the Creator of all men they knew well ; as St. Paul says, in quoting the Stoic poet, we are all His offspring by creation (Acts xvii. 28). But fatherhood to the Hebrews meant immeasurably more than creatorship, and they did not think of the full Fatherhood

of God as belonging to others than themselves. The same is largely true with all the attributes of God. The love, the holiness, the power, and wisdom of God, of which the Hebrews mainly think, are those manifested in their past history, and to be manifested in the great future for which they are looking. Though the Gentile nations and the material universe are not forgotten, they remain in the background. Belief in the universal sway of their God, when that belief came to them, did not lead the Hebrews to think less of themselves as but one people among many; it led them to think the more of themselves, because the God Who was their God had proved to be so great.

Now in all this St. Paul is thoroughly a Hebrew. He does not as a rule refer much in his Epistles to the incidents of Hebrew story. In face of the Resurrection and the gift of the Spirit older manifestations of God's power and goodness have lost much of their importance. But he rests, as the Hebrews ever rested, simply upon facts. See how all this comes out in the Epistle with which we are dealing. God is known to him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (i. 3). Just as Jesus has been "declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection" (Rom. i. 4), so God has by the same great fact been declared with power to be His Father; yes, and our Father too, since He has "blessed us," as the whole experience of the Church declares, "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (i. 3). The "glory," the "riches" (i. 6, 7) of His grace

are seen in Christ and His people, as they are seen nowhere else; we can trust "the greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places" (i. 19, 20). Why does St. Paul use an expression apparently so redundant as "the working of the strength of His might"? Just because his conception of God's power has been reached not by philosophical reasoning, but by actual experience; and St. Paul thinks not so much of the power which God may have in reserve, as of the power which has been, and is being, seen in actual operation, as God works for the fulfilment of His eternal purpose. So it is even when St. Paul speaks of God's sterner attributes. How do we know that "the wrath of God cometh upon the sons of disobedience" (v. 5, 6) for their covetousness and immorality? Because it is already manifested in the abject misery of such a place as Ephesus. The present wrath is but an earnest of the coming wrath, as the gift of the Spirit is but an earnest of the coming glory, but in the one case as in the other, St. Paul has a solid rest upon facts. Of course we do not know the purpose of God in its entirety: "the mystery," the secret, "of His will" (i. 9) is only revealed as the event discloses it. But we recognise the trend of God's purpose by its progressive fulfilment; we know something of what God's kingdom will be by what in the Church it is already found to be. Moreover,

as we shall see more fully later, just because it is in the experience of the Church that God has been so wonderfully manifested, it is the Fatherhood of God to the Church and its members, and His attributes as manifested towards them, of which St. Paul almost exclusively thinks and speaks. To have in the full sense God for your Father you must have the Church for your mother; the gospel is a universal gospel only because the Church itself is for all. When St. Paul says that "the one God and Father of all" is "over all, and through all, and in all," it is no doubt possible, with Dr. Robinson, to give to the words the widest possible significance. But a narrower meaning is surely more probable upon Hebrew lips. It is not merely that St. Paul is speaking exclusively of the Church in the whole immediate context; it is that in Hebrew thought God is the Father of His peculiar people, dwells among and works through His people, as He does not dwell among and work through others.

Now it is here that I would make the first practical suggestion as to our own teaching. Is our witness to God solely based upon facts, upon the experience of our Lord and of His people all down the ages, or is it based upon abstract arguments, and the traditional teaching of the Church? The difficulties which the war has suggested have made it very necessary to reassure our people as to God's character, and too often we try to meet the difficulties in detail while depending upon authority for the truth itself. But we ought to meet the disturbing facts by greater and more revealing facts, as the

Hebrews would have met them. "I will remember the works of the Lord; and call to mind Thy wonders of old time. I will think also of all Thy works: and my talking shall be of Thy doings" (Ps. lxxvii. 11, 12). We must get down to facts, if we wish to influence English people. They care little for authority to-day, whether of the Church or of the Bible; they do not follow abstract reasoning; but if we can show them facts, they will listen. What they require is God revealing Himself in action. The witness that we bear ought to be primarily to facts, the revealing facts of our Lord's and the Church's experience. Doctrines are the expression of facts, and the conclusions necessarily to be drawn from them; they cannot stand alone.

III

We see then how the Hebrew belief in the living God, Who reveals Himself in action, underlies and explains St. Paul's language. We pass to a second great belief, with which we may perhaps be less familiar, belief in the Church or people of God. If the first article of the Hebrew faith was belief in the living God, the second was belief in Israel as His people. To speak against "the people" was, as St. Stephen found, regarded as almost as blasphemous as to speak against God Himself. Moreover, the two beliefs were in close connection. It was, as we have seen, through God's dealings with His people that He had become known to them, and it was through His dealings with them that they looked for Him to become known to the other

nations. In the ancient world the reputation of a national God was bound up with the prosperity of his worshippers; if, *e.g.*, Moab defeated Ammon in war, the conclusion followed that Chemosh, the God of Moab, was superior to Milcom, the God of Ammon. The true God made use of the fact for His own self-revelation. He chose one nation out of many, and that one of the lowest of the nations. He revealed Himself to it, and established His own kingdom within it. In the amazing blessedness of His redeemed and obedient people, the nations of the world were to have an object-lesson of the greatness and goodness of the God Whom they worshipped, and so be led to desire His rule for themselves. "As the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory" (Jer. xiii. 11). Israel was to be a missionary people in act even more than in word; it was to win the world, not at first by sending out missionaries, but by manifesting the glory of God in its own national life. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23). No doubt, through Jewish disobedience and unbelief this Divine purpose for the time failed of its fulfilment; as St. Paul says, the name of God was in

fact blasphemed among the Gentiles owing to His people, rather than glorified (Rom. ii. 24). But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance ; God does not lay aside His plan, though our wilfulness may put off its fulfilment ; and the Hebrews continued to look for the fulfilment of their mission to the world in the great days to come (Rom. xi. 29). In the glorification of His Church and people God Himself would be glorified, and draw the nations into submission to His rule.

Now from all this it follows that religion was to the Hebrews essentially a corporate, and not primarily an individual matter. The blessings granted by God in the past, the blessings that He would grant in the future, were blessings for the whole body of His people ; the individual shared in them by membership in the body. Let us take St. Paul's well-known enumeration of Israel's privileges. " Whose is the adoption " into God's family—" and the glory," the manifestation of God—and the covenants " with their mutual obligations laid upon God and His people—" and the giving of the law," the special moral standard—" and the service of God," the divinely appointed worship—" and the promises " (Rom. ix. 4). These things belonged to Israel as a people, not to the individual as such. He shared in them, as long as he fulfilled his obligations as an Israelite ; but he could not separate himself from the life of Israel, and yet carry them away with him ; to be " cut off from Israel " was to lose all. There was plenty of deep and noble personal religion in ancient Israel,

but none that was merely individual. God of course might do as He would in the case of a Naaman here and there, but normally there was no possibility of communion with Israel's God without membership in the holy people, and the performance of the obligations of membership; to be "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" was to be "without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). Nor was there any expectation that the great days to come would bring a change. The salvation to be brought by God and His servant the Messiah was to be a corporate salvation for the people of God; and if the Gentiles were to share in the kingdom, it would be by incorporation into God's people that they would share in it.

Was then the divine method, what the Hebrews too often supposed it to be, a method of national favouritism? Not at all, and that for two reasons. In the first place, just because God's choice of Israel was the fulfilment of His eternal purpose of self-manifestation and salvation, the choice only held good in so far as it subserved that purpose; and thus, long before St. Paul's day, the distinction is recognised between Israel after the flesh and Israel after the Spirit. God always demands faith and the obedience of faith; a people that will not believe cannot be established (Isa. vii. 9); it is the faithful few rather than the unfaithful many, upon whom God's purpose rests. But that does not at all mean that religion becomes merely an individual matter. The faithful few are still members of the one body, and have all their privileges as such. What it

means is that God again and again has to purge Israel by judgment. Again and again the unfruitful branches are cast into the fire ; it is but the remnant that is preserved to carry on the national life. So it was especially at the time of the Captivity. Israel after the flesh passed away, and Israel after the Spirit remained ; the remnant that returned was the remnant that believed the promises given by God through His prophets, and so made the necessary sacrifices for the reconstitution of the corporate life of God's people. In the second place, Israel was not an exclusive body ; the Church of God was Catholic from the beginning. From the first there was much mixture of race among the people of God ; and even in the strictest days of Pharisaic supremacy, anybody who desired it could be incorporated unto God's people by circumcision (Isa. lvi.). The great change which we see in the Acts of the Apostles is not the throwing open of the gates of the Church, for they were open already, but the removal of the legal obligations which to so many had practically barred the way.

We may seem to have wandered far from St. Paul, but we have not in fact wandered from him in the slightest degree. All this Hebrew belief in the Church was part of St. Paul's inheritance, and in becoming a Christian he retained it in its entirety. He thinks of God's purpose as he has always thought of it ; he believes in the Church and in the corporate character of religion as he has always believed in them. What has really happened is this. Retaining still the supernatural beliefs of the

Pharisees, and so counting himself in a true sense as a Pharisee still (Acts xxiii. 6), he has abandoned the legalism of the Pharisees and gone back to the religion of the prophets and of the Lord Himself. What hinders us from seeing this is that we suppose that Israel is one body and the Catholic Church another. But no New Testament writer supposes anything of the kind. Israel after the Spirit, the only Israel that counts, or that has ever counted, is one with the Catholic Church. There is unbroken continuity between the Church before the Lord's coming and the Church after it. That this is the New Testament teaching I will at once show you, and we shall then go on to see how St. Paul's language is explained by it.

We observe, then, first, that the language applied to Israel, God's Church, in the Old Testament is unhesitatingly applied to the Apostolic Church. Its members are called with a holy calling, as Israel was; they are "saints," consecrated to God's service, as Israel was; they are adopted into God's family, as all Israelites were. Let us listen to St. Peter. "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9). Or let us listen to St. Paul himself. "We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Messiah Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3). "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter " (Rom. ii. 28, 29). Are we to say that God cast off His ancient people, and put the Catholic Church into their place ? Where is there a word of this in the New Testament ? That God has cast off His people is exactly what St. Paul denies (Rom. xi. 1). His view is very different. There is only one good olive tree, the Church of God, one and the same before and after the Lord's coming (Rom. xi. 17–20). " Some of the branches " have indeed been broken off for their unbelief, and Gentile believers have been grafted in, and partake of " the root and fatness of the olive tree," but the olive tree is one and the same. St. John's view corresponds. The " woman arrayed with the sun " (Rev. xii), who brings forth the Messiah, is the ancient Church of God, but she is one and the same with the Church that is persecuted after the Lord's Ascension. Christian Jews are not schismatics who have come out from Israel to form a new Church ; it is the unbelieving Jews who have lost their place in God's people by refusing to accept their Messiah, and who now " say that they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan " (Rev. ii. 9). Our customary view apparently arises from a misunderstanding of our Lord's words about building His Church. We suppose that to speak of building the Church presupposes that it has not been built before. But the word " build," as the Hebrews used it, does not presuppose this, and our Lord's meaning seems to

be quite different (cf. Jer. xviii. 9, etc.). He has found the Church ruinous, as it had been found so often before; He has dug down through the *débris* on which nothing can be built, till He has found the rock. St. Peter and the other believers in Israel are not the first stones which the Lord will lay in a new building; they are the rock foundation already there, and the Lord will rebuild the Church upon them. The words of St. James at the Council of Jerusalem will explain our Lord's meaning (Acts xv. 16–18). Of course there is a deep sense in which the Church is new after the gift of the Spirit; the Lord makes all things new, and the transformation goes very deep. But it is most important to insist upon the unbroken continuity of the one Church of God, not only that we may understand the New Testament, but for practical reasons. The ordinary language cuts us off from God's ancient people, and causes their history to seem the history of an alien race. That is why it is often so uninteresting to Englishmen to-day. They do not grasp the fact that Abraham is our forefather, and the saints and heroes of the Old Testament our kinsmen. Where, as in East London, the Jews are known and hated, references to Jewish history repel rather than attract. We shall never use the Old Testament aright till we claim our heritage in the glorious past of the people of God. This question of continuity was the great question at issue between St. Paul and the Pharisees of his day; is it not time that we gave up speaking as if the Pharisees were right, and St. Paul wrong?

But we are dealing to-day with the explanation of St. Paul's language in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and to that we now will turn. How great a light is thrown upon his language by the right view of the continuity of the Church a few instances will show. "Wherefore remember that aforetime ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (ii. 11, 12). The point is not that it is no longer necessary to belong to the commonwealth of Israel, and to be within the covenants; that is as necessary as ever it was. The point is that the Catholic Church, in which the wall of separation has been broken down between Jew and Gentile, is itself the commonwealth of Israel, and that within it the covenants stand, and will receive their perfect fulfilment; the great hope is now the heritage of all who believe, and who by membership in the Church are no longer without God. Again, when it is said that God gave the Christ to be "head over all things to the Church" (i. 22), and that the Christ "loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word" (v. 25, 26), the language is far more intelligible if we recognize that the Church is not regarded as first founded by Christ, but rather as a body which existed before He came, waiting for

Him as the Head Who is to complete it, and the Saviour Who is to cleanse it in the waters of baptism. So, again, when St. Paul teaches that the purpose of the Messianic salvation is to manifest through the Church God's glory to the world, he gives expression to no new thought; it is simply that the corporate mission of the Church to the world remains what it has always been. The Church, the earthly sphere of the kingdom of God, is still to be an object-lesson of the unspeakable blessings which that rule brings with it. Look down the first section of the Epistle, and you will see how this thought is again and again repeated. "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (i. 6), "to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory" (i. 12), "to the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory" (i. 14). Or take the concluding words of the more directly doctrinal half of the Epistle. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever" (iii. 20, 21). Or, again, take an even bolder flight of the Apostle's thought. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (iii. 10). Here we find that large cosmic outlook which is characteristic of much of the Jewish apocalyptic literature, and which passes on from it to the New Testament. But the general

thought is the same. It is "God's inheritance in the saints" (i. 18), which is the means of manifesting Him, even to beings higher than ourselves. Finally, when we come to those at first sight startling words, "the Church, which is Christ's body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (i. 23), and recognise that St. Paul means that Christ—or it may even be God Himself—is not complete without the Church, we can see that what St. Paul says is only what might have been said at any time since God's choice of Israel. God's purpose being what it is, His people are His necessary instrument.*

But it is not only in such passages as these that it is necessary to recognise St. Paul's corporate outlook. It is even more necessary, if we are to understand his view of the Lord Himself, and of the work which He has done for us. It is needless to say that the Christ when He came proved to be so far greater than He had ever been expected to be, and did so far more than He had ever been expected to do, that what St. Paul has to tell us of Him and of His work seems at first to have little connection with the thought of the people of God before His coming. Of that work we shall think in the next lecture. But it is true none the less that even here it is with Hebrew thought that St. Paul begins, and that the old thought remains recognisable and

* For another possible translation of this verse see Dr. Robinson's Commentary.

important, in spite of all the enrichment which it has received.

How then, let us ask, did St. Paul as a Hebrew think about the Christ? He thought of Him as the King, the Champion, the Vindicator of God's people; the great instrument by whom God would establish His kingdom in the world. In the Old Testament, as we have seen, next to God Himself, it is the Church which is most prominent, rather than the Christ; in some of the prophets the Christ does not appear at all. But when He does appear, however differently He may be conceived by one writer and by another, He appears for the Church, and for the establishment of the Divine kingdom. Now this we must ever remember if we would understand the teaching of St. Paul. No doubt, as has been just said, the Christ, when He came, did much that He had never been expected to do; He proved to be not the Christ only but the suffering Servant of the Lord, and indeed only by suffering as the Servant attained His glory as the Christ. No doubt also the Christ in His earthly life showed the deepest and tenderest interest in the individual men and women of His people. But none the less no Hebrew could ever have thought of the Christ simply as the Saviour of the individual. He is, as St. Paul distinctly says, "the Saviour of the body"; His redemption is a corporate redemption for the whole Church of which He is the predestined Head. The very word "Christ" carries ever with it a reference to the Church and to the kingdom of God, and, though it is true that all blessing depends upon

personal faith and our relation to the Christ Himself, it is also true that membership in Christ is bound up with membership in the Church, and that every blessing that is ours is simply a consequence of our union with Him there. So one is the Christ with His people, that His death is their death, His rising and glorification their rising and glorification, united to Him by that baptismal incorporation to which their faith has led them, all that is His is in measure their own.

Let us see how this comes out in the Epistle before us. "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, that no man should glory" (ii. 8, 9). St. Paul may be looking back to the time when the Ephesian converts first believed and were baptised, or he may be looking back to the redemption work of the Lord's death and resurrection; but the salvation in either case is corporate. It is by individual faith that we come to share in it, but the salvation has been won for the whole body. Still more important is it to recognise the Old Testament standpoint at the outset of the Epistle. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Christ Jesus unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (i. 3–5). Is this what we to-day call Calvinism?

Does St. Paul mean that before the foundation of the world God made a selection out of the multitudes of mankind, choosing some and not others for membership in His Christ and adoption into His family? No doubt to us, with our individualistic standpoint, St. Paul's words suggest this. But when we remember the corporate outlook of the Hebrews, our difficulty passes away. St. Paul is not thinking of any individual predestination at all, except the predestination of the Christ Himself; the old philosophical puzzle of the relation of God's foreknowledge to man's free will never seems to disturb him. God has chosen One, and One only, to be the great instrument of His purpose, His own beloved Son. His Son is the One elect, and, if we are His members, we are elect in Him; He is the one Son of God, and if we are His members, we have the adoption as God's sons in Him. In destining our Lord before the foundation of the world to be the Head and Saviour of His body the Church, God has *ipso facto* destined us before the foundation of the world to be all that the Christ makes us. We may accept the Gospel, or we may refuse the Gospel; but, if we accept it, and are incorporated into Christ, we immediately find ourselves sharers in all that He has for us, and eternally destined to be sharers.

IV

May I, in conclusion, point out what all this should mean for our teaching to-day? Our first duty is to put the individual back into his place,

and to substitute an essentially corporate conception of religion for that merely individual outlook so long dominant among us. I know that this is to ask a hard thing. English religion is saturated with individualism, and in almost every aspect grievously ignores the relation of the individual to the body. It is not English Protestantism alone which does this, but almost all our religion. Too often we think of baptism, confirmation, absolution, the Eucharist itself, simply as means of individual blessing, and not at all in relation to that corporate relation to Christ and His people which they give and maintain. No doubt, as things are to-day, the evil is to some extent unavoidable. The dreadful divisions which disgrace the Church of Christ, our failure to embody in it as we should the kingdom of God, and witness to that kingdom and its blessings by the power and the purity of our corporate life, render the task of giving to the Church its right place in our teaching more than difficult. The English mind is in such confusion that, if we insist upon the importance of the Church, our hearers are apt to suppose that we are insisting upon the importance of the clergy ; they actually confuse the corporate and ecclesiastical standpoint with clericalism, a thing to which it is utterly opposed. Moreover, the whole relation in which the Church of England stands to the State tends most seriously to obscure the very meaning of the Church to our people. Our difficulties are so great that, if it were possible to teach the faith of our Lord without facing and overcoming them, we might well shrink

from our task. What I have tried to show is that this corporate outlook is so essential a part of all Biblical religion that to ignore it is to make the Bible unintelligible; and if our circumstances prevent us from maintaining it, those circumstances must at all costs be changed. Do not suppose for a moment that I am undervaluing the importance of personal faith and conversion, or suggesting that mere outward membership in the Church can do anything for anybody without them. But that is not the side of the truth which we neglect. It ought to be just as possible for us as it was for St. Paul to insist to the utmost upon the Church of God one through the ages, and upon the Christ as the Saviour of the body, and yet to insist equally strongly that living membership in the Christ and His body the Church depends upon personal faith and self-surrender to His will. Our witness must be borne. In these days all the best minds are primarily concerned with the welfare of the community; is the Church to be the last stronghold of individualism, the Church which first taught the world the true relation of the individual to the body? It must not be so. We must preach the King and the kingdom together. Christianity means fellowship with Christ in the Christian community; no other Christianity is worthy of the name.

LECTURE II

WE tried, you will remember, in the first lecture to see what light we could gain for the understanding of our Epistle from the convictions common to St. Paul and the other Hebrews of his day. But such light will not carry us all the way. Though St. Paul ever remained a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and could even claim with truth to remain a Pharisee, his conversion changed everything for him. Though the old convictions remained, new were added to them, and even the old suffered a change by the new context in which they came to be found. At first a Hebrew, who had come to believe that the expected Christ was no other than Jesus of Nazareth, might seem not to have changed his general outlook in any way. He had already believed in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth ; in the coming Christ, His Son ; in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Remission of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting. The difference between the Christian Hebrew and his unbelieving fellow-countrymen lay primarily in this, that he knew, while they did not know, Who the coming Christ was. But the difference could not remain no more than

this. For the Christian Hebrew would find that, believing that the Christ was Jesus, his conception of the Christ and His work would begin to expand immeasurably. Jesus, the Christ, he would find, not only fulfilled, or would at His return fulfil, all the noblest expectations formed concerning Him, but did and would do far more than had ever been expected; and this because He Himself was not only all that He had been expected to be, but One immeasurably greater. Thus, to take but one example, a change would take place in the comparative importance of the Christ and the Church. The Christ would move from the third place to the second, God Himself alone coming before Him, and the Church from the second place to the third.* So it is in the thought of St. Paul. The Christ and the kingdom of God remain, as before, almost inseparable; to speak of the one is to speak of the other; if we would understand the New Testament we must never allow the thought of the kingdom, which the Christ brings and will bring, to recede from our view. But it is the Christ Himself Who now occupies the foreground; the kingdom here and hereafter depends upon Him entirely. Now it is of St. Paul's conception of the Christ and His work as expanded by Christian experience, in so far as it is illustrated by and explains the language of the Epistle, that we shall now think. As before, our method will be, not so much to rise from the language of the Epistle to St. Paul's thought, as to descend from St. Paul's

* To say this is not to forget the Holy Spirit: the Church, and the Spirit Who dwells in it, are bound up together.

thought to the language of the Epistle. When we read, we can, as he says, perceive his "understanding in the secret of Christ" (iii. 4), but it may help us if we look at that secret as systematically as possible before we read at all.

I

The first thing then that we must remember is that the mission of the Christ is not in any way an afterthought of God. What we have to consider is "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (iii. 11). Jesus Himself was chosen of God "before the foundation of the world" (i. 4). If we too were chosen, it was only because He was chosen, and we are His members; there has been no expansion in the purpose of God for Him. Whether or no the Incarnation should be regarded as contingent upon the Fall it is unnecessary to inquire. God must eternally have taken account of sin, and so what He would have done apart from it concerns us but little. God's purpose in Christ has nothing of the character of an expedient; what He has done He eternally intended to do. For example, He always intended to bestow His Christ upon all things as their Head; and, as St. Paul says, to sum up all things, to present them as a whole, in Christ. It is only when all things attain their right relation to Him that they find themselves in their right relation one to another. Now we should notice all this, obvious as it may seem, because the literature of the old covenant tends,

perhaps unconsciously to us, to produce a contrary impression. God of old time spoke unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions as well as in divers manners, and the new revelations as they came have the appearance of afterthoughts and corrections added to the old. Thus, *e.g.*, it appears that to the first thought of a kingdom of God realised already in Israel there is added the second thought of a future kingdom of God to be brought about by the Divine power; that to the thought that this kingdom will come simply by the power of God there is added the thought that the Lord of hosts will send a great Deliverer, the Messiah, to establish it. So with the Messiah Himself. At first He is little more than a human being. Later, and especially in the Book of Enoch, He is seen to be far more than this; He is the pre-existent Divine Son. At first, the kingdom He will establish appears to be in Israel only; later, the Gentiles find a place in it. At first the kingdom is earthly; later it appears to be heavenly and supernatural, and acquires that cosmic significance to which we find several references in our Epistle. All this looks like afterthought and correction, and in the minds of the prophets themselves may actually be so. But we should not try to harmonise the prophetic anticipations for ourselves, and build up from them a complete picture of the future. We should begin at the other end. We should pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give unto us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (i. 17); and then, knowing by experience what the

Christ and His kingdom are, we should look back over the past anticipations and see how gloriously they have been fulfilled, and how, even though at present they may in part wait for their fulfilment, by present experience we are able to understand something of what that fulfilment will be (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). In this way we may escape a tendency prominent in some writers to-day, the tendency to contrast different elements in the complex whole, as if they were incompatible one with another. It is asked, *e.g.*, whether the New Testament doctrine of the kingdom is one of a kingdom present, or of a kingdom yet to come. The answer is that both accounts of the kingdom are found in the New Testament as they are found in the Old, because both a present kingdom in the Church and a final heavenly kingdom have always been included in the purpose of God ; and out of the unsearchable riches of His Christ the one has arisen, and the other will arise. What God has done He must always have intended to do. The " secret which from all ages has been hid in God Who created all things," must, when revealed, be found to embrace " all things " (iii. 9). Many to-day appear to be interested in the Church only, and to be willing, if they may have their way in the Church, to let the world go as it will. Others, though they are themselves members of the Church, fail to grasp the place which it occupies in God's purpose. Rightly desiring that the kingdom of God should come everywhere, they forget that it is God's purpose to establish it in the Church first, and by its manifestation there to attract the

world to it. The right way is St. Paul's way. He is absolutely clear as to the distinction between the Church and the world, and never attempts, as we sometimes do to-day, to enforce the principles of the kingdom outside the Church. But his outlook is not only as wide as the world, but a great deal wider. He longs " to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery " (iii. 9), and, having seen, to act upon what they see ; he is not satisfied with a headship of the Christ over things upon the earth, but looks for it to be ultimately exercised over things in the heavens also. What then is it that the Christ has done, and does for us, that He should occupy such a position as this ? (i. 10).

But, before turning to this question, there is one thing which it may be well to point out. It is throughout Jesus as the Christ with whom St. Paul is dealing, rather than Jesus as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. That St. Paul's language about the Christ presupposes His Divinity may be entirely true. As has been often pointed out, such language as that of the opening sentence— " Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ "—seems itself to presuppose it. If the Messiahship of Jesus is sufficient to account for such language, Messiahship must involve far more than the Hebrews were accustomed to believe. Moreover, St. Paul certainly believed that our Lord was One Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and that He was in the form of God before He took upon Himself the form of a servant. But the full and formulated doctrine of the Person

of Christ belongs to a time far later than St. Paul's, and we should not anticipate it in interpreting his words. Moreover, if I may again interpolate a practical suggestion, I believe that we should teach the Christian faith much better, if we ourselves said, in the early stages of our teaching, as little about the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity as St. Paul does. We should, I think, begin with Jesus Christ as an actual Person in history, with what He did for us, with the glory to which God has raised Him, and with what because of His glorification He can do for us now. Our people should learn His power in their own experience before the ultimate issues are raised about Him. That Jesus is God is a conclusion from and a summary of experience ; we should not anticipate it before the experience is there. If the history of individual human development largely repeats the history of the evolution of the race, we may perhaps anticipate something similar in spiritual development. The history of the formation of our personal convictions may rightly follow the history of the formation of the convictions of the Church at large.

II

But to return to our immediate subject Jesus is the Christ. What is it that as the Christ He has done and does for us ? We will begin with the facts of His earthly life.

Now I need not remind you that it is not St. Paul's way to dwell in detail upon the facts of our

Lord's earthly life. It was the Lord living and glorified Who had revealed Himself to St. Paul, and with whom St. Paul was chiefly concerned. There is perhaps no Epistle of which this is more true than it is of the Epistle to the Ephesians. But, as we have seen, we may easily exaggerate St. Paul's want of interest in our Lord's earthly life; there are instances even in this Epistle where the thought of our Lord's earthly life may lie behind his words, and they are of some interest.

Look first at the passage of the Epistle, where St. Paul first turns directly to the position of the Gentiles (ii. 17–22). Note first the words in which he says that our Lord came and preached peace to those that were far off and peace to those that were nigh. Is it quite clear that, as Dr. Robinson urges, in these words "we have a reference, not to the work of the Lord Jesus on earth before the crucifixion, but to the work of the exalted Christ in announcing the peace which His death had made"? No doubt it may be so: though the language in this case seems somewhat strange, the strangeness may be explained by the fact that St. Paul is adopting Old Testament words; and the preaching of the Apostles in the power of the Spirit of Christ may be rightly described as the coming and the preaching of the Lord Himself. But the action of the Lord certainly forms one great whole. The Gospels, as St. Luke says, tell us what "Jesus began both to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1), and the Acts what He further did after His Ascension; and St. Paul's language may cover both parts of His activity. St. Paul was surely

aware that the Lord in His earthly life did preach peace to those who were afar off as well as to those that were nigh. In the first place, He appealed to the outcasts, who, like the Gentiles, were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and whose spiritual position He practically identified with that of the heathen (Matt. xviii. 17). In the second place, notably in His sermon at Nazareth, our Lord clearly seems to anticipate the inclusion of the Gentiles within the body to which the blessings of the kingdom belong, provided that they exercise that faith which the people of Nazareth are refusing. Both the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian are examples of people who receive supernatural blessing through their faith in the promises of God made by His servants. I need not remind you of the many who are to come from the four quarters of the world and sit down with the fathers in the kingdom, or of the other sheep not of the Hebrew fold whom the Lord must bring and incorporate in the one flock under the one Shepherd. In the teaching of the Lord, as in the teaching of St. Paul himself, it is faith, and not obedience to the words of the law, which enables men to receive the blessings of the kingdom.

Secondly, we should observe the words in which St. Paul says that the Gentiles are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone. We are, of course, at once reminded of the Lord's own words as to the foundation upon

which He will build His Church, and of His reference to Himself as the corner-stone. This reference follows immediately upon the parable of the wicked husbandmen, who murdered the son and heir of the Lord of the vineyard, the parable which concludes with the words, "What therefore will the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard unto others." You see again how close is the connection between St. Paul's teaching and that of the Lord. St. Paul's doctrine of the universal headship intended for Christ is one with our Lord's teaching that He is the "Heir." Moreover, the very reason why the Church must be rebuilt is that it is faith in Jesus as the Christ which is the essential thing, and not obedience to the Mosaic Law; and from this it follows that Gentiles may be members of the Church as well as Jews.

Thirdly, we should observe the words in which St. Paul says that "our Lord made Gentiles and Jews to be one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (ii. 14, 15). We need not at this point consider the rather difficult thoughts as to the relation of Christ's death to the law, which appear in other Epistles, and may here also be in St. Paul's mind. Two things at any rate are clear. In the first place, the separation of Jews from Gentiles did centre round the law. Though the Church, as we have seen, was open to all even before the Lord came, the necessity for those who would join it of

obedience to the law formed for the vast majority of Gentiles an obstacle practically insuperable. In the second place, it was our Lord Who took this barrier away. Not only did His teaching "make all meats clean" (Mark vii. 19); its whole trend, like that of the prophetic teaching, was to discount the importance of all that was not really included in the dictates of holiness and love. Finally, by opening a new way to the Father, He rendered the old means of approach no longer necessary. As St. Paul says, He reconciled them both in one body into God through the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby. At the Conference of Jerusalem it was precisely this consideration of the new way made to the Father, to which St. Peter referred as rendering it no longer reasonable to insist upon the observance of the law. "God," he says, "made no distinction between" "Gentiles and Jews," cleansing their hearts by faith. "Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they." Those are the abiding refutations of legalism, ready for it whenever it lifts its head. Let the legalist say what he will about the obligatory character of the things upon which he lays such stress, God, in the bestowal of His spiritual blessings, makes no distinction between those who observe them and those who do not. Moreover, the legalist himself does not really trust them. He looks to be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, as others do.

III

We have passed already beyond the limits of the earthly life of our Lord to the thought of that new way to the Father, which by His death He has made for Jew and Gentile alike, thus making peace for them, both with God and with one another. It is to the fuller consideration of this that we shall now turn. The language which St. Paul employs is not always easy to understand. In part it is drawn from the language of Old Testament sacrifice. Thus he speaks of redemption through Christ's blood (i. 7), and again says that Christ loved us, and "gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (v. 2). But it is not language of this kind which is most characteristic of St. Paul, but rather that language of mystical identification, according to which Christians are said to be "in Christ" and to share all that He possesses. Thus we read that "God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (ii. 4–7). And, if we ask in what "the exceeding riches of His grace" consist, we find the answer in chap. i. 3–7, where we hear of "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in

Christ," of our share in the eternal election of the Lord, of our sonship to God in Him, of God's favour freely bestowed on us in the Beloved, of our "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace." Now all this is very uplifting language, but it is by no means easy to give to it a definite meaning; and perhaps, as we know by experience, still less easy to make use of it in our practical teaching. It is, I think, the prevalence in St. Paul of language of this kind which leads many to put him aside, and fall back upon shallower but more familiar conceptions. Will any light fall upon it if we make use of our old method, and endeavour not so much to understand St. Paul's mind by his language, as to understand his language by his mind? Perhaps we may obtain help both from what we know of St. Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament, and from what he may have known of the earthly life of the Lord.

We will take the Old Testament first. It is certainly very remarkable how close is the connection between the calling and experience of Israel, God's Church, and the calling and experience of the Lord through Whom its divine mission is being accomplished. We are generally somewhat apologetic when we deal with the quotations from the Old Testament in the second chapter of St. Matthew, especially with the quotation from Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" (Matt. ii. 15). We frankly admit that the reference of Hosea is to the Exodus of Israel, of old described as God's Son, His firstborn (Exod. iv. 22). But the

question arises whether the experience of Israel was not intended by God to foreshadow the experience of the Lord; whether there was not from the first a mysterious connection between the Church and the Head to be afterwards given to it. St. Thomas Aquinas truly says that God can use deeds to declare His intentions, as we can use words; was it not so here? The birth of the Church was a miraculous birth; it went down in its infancy into Egypt; it returned to the Holy Land for its life and ministry; it suffered death and burial in the exile; it rose again at the return; it looked forward confidently to lordship over the world. The very passages which most clearly foreshadow the death, the resurrection, and the glory of the Lord, such passages as Ps. xxii. and Isaiah liii., probably were written in the first instance of the experience of God's son Israel, though the fulfilment in Christ was in the mind of God. It is quite possible for the mystical interpretation of Scripture to degenerate into an exercise of fancy; but, if it is kept upon the broad Scriptural lines, it is abundantly justified. Now, whatever our own view of this may be, there can be no doubt about St. Paul's. You will remember how he interprets "Abraham's seed" as meaning Christ. "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16). There is no time to discuss this passage at length; it may be that by "Christ," St. Paul means, not Christ as an individual, but Christ as including His body the Church (cf. 1 Cor. xii. 12); the immediate

point is that this close and mysterious relation which the Old Testament suggests between Christ and the Church or people of God is fully recognised by St. Paul.

May we not go further still, and say that it was fully recognised by our Lord Himself, and that the mysterious doctrine of St. Paul is not only our Lord's own doctrine, but that it lies at the root of our Lord's action as we see it in the Gospel story? It is not only that He applies to Himself such passages as Ps. xxii. and Isa. liii.; the characteristic Old Testament symbol of Israel, the vine (Ps. lxxx. 8), is used by the Lord to set forth His relation to His people (John xv. 1 ff.). It is a symbol which teaches their identification. The vine has no trunk; it is, so to say, all branches. Whatever is true of the vine is true of the branches, as long as they remain in it. So it is with another symbol which the Lord employs: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24). Thus far the Lord has failed to reproduce Himself in His followers; they have shrunk from the Cross, which He has called them to bear, and in the Passion He must abide by Himself alone. But after He has died and been glorified, it will no longer be so; the grain of corn will have become an ear. The Christ will be no longer just an individual, but a multitude of Christs bound together by their common relation to Himself: what He is they will be. The grain is not regarded as ceasing to be; it "keeps" its life, preserving its identity in the abundant fruit it

bears. "He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

But then, we may be told, this is simply the teaching of the Fourth Gospel; we have no right to suppose that it is prior to the teaching of St. Paul. The answer is that the Synoptic Gospels, rightly interpreted, teach the same thing. The deep thoughts which we find expressed in John xii. 23–26 are also expressed, though in wholly different language, in Mark x. 35–45. The baptism with which the Lord is to be baptized is that baptism of the Passion by which He will pass to the larger and fuller life beyond. "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50). Moreover, it is not for Himself alone. The Lord is giving "His life a ransom for many." The words are probably to be connected with the language of Ps. xlix. 7–9, and of Is. liii. 12. What no one else can do, "give to God a ransom for his brother, that he should still live alway," our Lord does for all the "many" members of His body the Church. But it is no mere external atonement; it depends upon a real identification. His members must themselves drink of His cup and be baptised with His baptism, if they are to share His glory; or, as the thought is expressed in the Fourth Gospel: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will the Father honour" (John xii. 26). You see then that this doctrine of mystical union, and of atonement

as bound up with it, is no invention or discovery of St. Paul's; it is simply the teaching of the Lord Himself.

But there is more to say even than this. Our Lord's action, as we see it in the Gospel story, exactly corresponds to His teaching. On the one hand He identifies Himself with the Church of God, and on the other He seeks to lead the Church of God to identify itself with Him. The Incarnation, accomplished under the conditions chosen by God, identified the Lord, not primarily with the human race, but with the Church. He was not only "born of a woman," but "born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law" (Gal. iv. 4, 5). All that God asks the nation of His choice to do and to suffer, He Himself is called to do and to suffer; He will even accept the baptism of John (Matt. iii. 15). But, on the other hand, the nation first, and, when the nation refuses, the faithful remnant of the nation, is called to identify itself with Him. It is thus only that the life of the Church can be saved. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38). This identification takes place in the first instance by personal adherence, passing on into clear and definite faith, but it leads to more even than this. The Christ seeks to reproduce Himself in His followers, to make His life of sacrificial devotion their life also. He asks them to take up their Crosses, and go with Him to death; if at last He

dies for them, it is not that they may escape sacrifice, but that He may, as we have seen, reproduce Himself in them, pour out His Spirit upon them, that they may make His sacrifice their own. The true atonement comes in this way. It is sometimes urged that the parable of the Prodigal Son shows that in the mind of the Lord no atonement is necessary; repentance and return is all that God demands. The answer is plain. The parable was spoken in connection with our Lord's appeal to the outcasts; and it was precisely by leading the outcasts to cast in their lot with Him that our Lord brought them back to the Father; their new sonship was a sharing in His own. They, like "all things" (Eph. i. 10) else, must be summed up in Christ through faith and the reproduction of Himself in them; there is no real return to the Father apart from this.

We are now in a position, not only to understand St. Paul's language, but to see that his doctrine is no new thing, but all in line with the teaching of the Old Testament and of the Lord. Everything depends upon that gift of the Spirit which the glorified Christ bestows, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." While the grain of wheat has not yet been sacrificed, the Spirit dwells with the apostles by their companionship with the Spirit-bearing Lord: in the future the Spirit will Himself be in them. It is in this that atonement culminates. The death is an atoning death, because it is the way to the gift of an atoning life, and those who receive it have "access by one Spirit unto the Father." That is what St. Paul says, "In whom ye also, having

heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (i. 13). The believer, just because he believes, comes forward to baptism, including in early days what we now call confirmation, and by the reception of the Holy Spirit, he is made one with Christ in glory. Our Lord breathing on the Apostles on the first Easter Day expresses the same thing. The Easter life—the life of the Risen and Ascended Christ—is given us by the Holy Spirit, and thus heaven and earth are one. We may express the truth by saying that we have risen to Christ where He is. God has "quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (ii. 5, 6). Or we may express it by saying that God has sent down the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, upon us. In the same way, when we are thinking of the Eucharist, we may say that by consecration our gifts are carried to the heavenly altar, or say that Christ has descended upon our altars here. But there is no real question of place in such heavenly relationships. The point is that for all those who in faith and repentance desire that identification with Christ in His life and experience which He desires for us, baptism brings it about by the gift of the Spirit: "We have our redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of God's grace" (i. 7). God makes us accepted in the Beloved (i. 6), to quote the valuable A.V. translation, because we become members of the Beloved,

not by any external imputation of His merits, but by a real identification, which, as we respond to it—and with that we must deal to-morrow—will be seen in our life and activity.

Does now this explanation altogether remove the difficulty which we find in St. Paul's language? Not altogether. For, say what we will about the irrelevance of spatial considerations in these unions of heaven and earth which are the extension of the Incarnation, the language which St. Paul employs as to resurrection and ascension and sitting in heavenly places inevitably suggests them to us. Moreover, let St. Paul say what he will, we are only too conscious that we are still here on the earth, bound hand and foot by earthly limitations. How are we to deal with this difficulty? The first thing I would point out is that for the use of the word "places" in this connection we are entirely indebted to our translators. Alike in i. 3, i. 20, and ii. 6, the word "places" is printed in italics; there is nothing corresponding to it in the Greek. Probably if we spoke of heavenly conditions or the heavenly sphere, we should come nearer to St. Paul's actual meaning. But we must also remember that in this resurrection and ascension of which he speaks, spatial considerations are almost as much out of place in thinking of our Lord as in thinking of ourselves. I am not for a moment suggesting that our Lord's Body was left in the tomb, or throwing doubt upon His visible ascension. The spiritual truth is manifested in acts which belong to the world of space and time. The cloud of Olivet was probably the cloud of the Mount

of Transfiguration; not the passing cloud of a summer day, but the cloud which was the recognised symbol of the Divine presence. But the glorification of the Lord was His transcendence of spatial conditions rather than His removal from one part of space to another. Moreover—and this it is extremely important to understand—St. Paul, for all the boldness of his language, is always intensely conscious of the present limitations which our bodies impose upon us. The great present difference between the Head and the members, is that the Head has been glorified in spirit and in body, while the members have been glorified in spirit only. The body is part of the material world, and the material world has not yet felt the power of the Lord's risen life. Look at the well-known passage in Rom. viii. 18–24: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For by hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth

for that which he seeth ? " You see, we are waiting for the redemption of our body while in our Lord the redemption of the body has been already accomplished. On the physical side we are at present only saved in anticipation and in hope, while in our Lord Himself full salvation is already attained. Or consider it not in relation to the language which speaks of our rising and ascending with the Lord, but in relation to the language which speaks of His sending down His Spirit upon us. Has the Spirit accomplished His work for us in its entirety ? Certainly not. All that we have here is " the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts " (2 Cor. i. 22). An earnest is a sum paid on account, a promise of full payment in the future (cf. Robinson on Eph. i. 14). At present we feel the touch of the Spirit in our own spirits ; our bodies are very little affected, though probably they ought to be more affected through the medium of our spirits than at present they are ; the question of spiritual healing has its place here. But it will not be always so. " If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you " (Rom. viii. 11). You see that, though at present we have only the earnest, full payment will one day be made. The Spirit's touch will be felt in the body as well as in the spirit, and at last even in the transformation of the outward scene. That is how the kingdom of God, the great hope of our calling, is at last to come. The rule of God and the rule of the Spirit are one and the same

rule. The kingdom has come in the coming of the Spirit. We have been "delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love" (Col. i. 13). But the kingdom of God has still to come in that activity of the Spirit for which not only we, but the whole creation wait and long. At last we shall be what Christ is; risen and ascended both in body and in spirit, and the good pleasure of God will be completely accomplished. When the Baptist and our Lord said that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, they said what was absolutely true. But the Lord Christ had to die to bring it, because till He was glorified through death He could not pour out the Spirit or reproduce Himself in us. Now in Him we are blessed with every spiritual blessing on that heavenly side of our life which has felt the Spirit's touch. We can wait for the rest. "If we hope"—with the sure and certain hope of Christians—"for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. viii. 25).

What then have we? "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. iv. 4–6). The one hope of our calling, the promise of the kingdom, logically comes first. But we cannot claim that kingdom as individuals; the kingdom of God belongs to the people of God, as the whole Bible teaches us. Thus we must be incorporated into the one body, and be made to drink of the one Spirit. And here we find

ourselves face to face with the one Lord Christ, Whose body it is. We cannot enter the body without faith in Him as the Christ of God, the Bringer and Head of the kingdom, and baptism unto Him. But, believing and baptised, we do not stop short even with Him ; He brings us to the one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all (cf. ii. 18). Then, of course, as the members of His Son, elect in His Son, we share the mission of His Son. Grace is given to us according to the special work that we have to do for the building up of the body of Christ. We are no more chosen for ourselves than Christ was ; we are chosen for the sake of the Church, and beyond it for the salvation of the world.

Is all this too high for us, and for those to whom we are sent ? Much too high, of course, while we and they are left to our natural dullness of understanding. That is why we are continually substituting something lower and poorer. What we prefer is a simple—and that generally means a legalistic—religion. We like, as we say, to know what we have to do, do it, ask " What lack I yet ? " and pass on to something more interesting. But God has not given us a religion simple in this sense, but a religion immeasurably profound, which neither we nor our people will ever understand till the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, gives unto us a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of our hearts enlightened (i. 17, 18). And what St. Paul's example impresses upon us in this Epistle as nowhere else is that we must pray for it both for

ourselves and for others. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (iii. 14–19). St. Paul's words are very necessary, as the words of the prophets have always been, but he does not in the least expect to make all clear to the Ephesians by them. Though the Spirit has been given, the Spirit must be claimed, and stirred up by ceaseless prayer; otherwise the wisdom and the revelation will tarry. That is what we forget, is it not? If we and our people do not understand the gospel, we must pray until we do, and not substitute something easier. Always—and this is the last point that I want to make to-day—inspiration must follow upon revelation, or revelation is valueless. God's revelation of Himself and of His purpose is always made to us in facts. It was so before our Lord came. God revealed Himself to His people by the facts of their national life. It is so in the Christian revelation also. God is revealed to us in the facts of our Lord's earthly life and experience, in the great facts recorded in the Creeds. The great statement, God is Love, like the earlier descriptions

of God's character, which we find in the Old Testament, is a summary of the revelation which the facts contain. But the facts may be before our eyes, and yet be dumb to us, if there is not present that teaching of the Holy Ghost which enables us to receive their message. The heavens declare the glory of God only to those who have eyes to see it; the history of Israel may seem even to the learned historian only the history of the struggles of petty Eastern tribes to maintain some sort of independence as against the great empires by which they were surrounded; the history of our Lord Himself may suggest nothing more than a deluded fanatic whose Messianic pretensions fell to the ground directly they were seriously challenged by the authorities. So God not only reveals, but inspires, that the revelation may be understood; and it is the grand function of Holy Scripture to pass on to us the explanation of the revealing facts given age by age by that goodly fellowship of the prophets, whom God inspired to see the revelation and to expound it to us. But even that is not enough. Though the teaching of Holy Scripture does make God's revelation far clearer to us than it could otherwise be, we may be familiar with Scripture and yet be unenlightened by it. The spirit in ourselves must light up the spirit that speaks in the sacred writings. So it surely is that in the Epistles of the captivity there comes to be so great an emphasis upon these powers of understanding which it is the function of the Spirit to bestow upon us. "The riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all

wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of His will" (i. 8, 9). "A spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (i. 17). "That ye may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (iii. 18). "That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (iv. 14). Is St. Paul going back upon what he told the Corinthians? Is he disenchanted as to the power of faith? Surely not. It is rather that he has come more than ever to see how important in their own place are the intellectual elements which faith itself contains, and how much we are at the mercy of every new idea, till we understand the Christian revelation, and see it as a whole.

St. Paul never becomes an intellectualist. It is always the teaching of the Spirit rather than the acuteness of the brain, upon which he depends. But he does, to quote Dr. Robinson's definitions, think it necessary that we should have "the knowledge which sees into the heart of things, which knows them as they really are," and "the understanding which leads to right action." We must pray for them, both for ourselves and for others; no reliance upon external authority will enable us to do without them.

LECTURE III

WE have thought of the Christian life as it appears in view of the grace and purpose of God. We have seen that it is essentially a heavenly and supernatural life, lived by the power of the Spirit in union with the glorified Christ. St. Paul, in his exposition of all this, has used, as is his wont, most glowing language. Though there has been full recognition of the need of continual illumination and growth, there has been practically no recognition of the existence of actual sin in those to whom he writes. Sin, in the earlier chapters of the Epistle, appears simply as a fact of the past. "Ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein aforetime ye walked" (ii. 1). "We also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (ii. 3). There is great power in such spiritual idealism. Even though it does not express the whole truth, it expresses the most uplifting part of it. To be told that the past is behind us is of great value for helping us to keep it there. We greatly need to have our minds uplifted by the thought of the perfection of the redeeming work done for us, and of

the grandeur of that Christian position which is ours. Nothing is worse for us than the language which tells us that "we can't be perfect here," and so dissuades us from attempting to be so. But St. Paul is no dreamer. He knows very well the life of such a place as Ephesus, and how easily his converts may, and in some cases do, relapse into their old sins. He knows that the Christian life is in fact a hand-to-hand conflict with the powers of darkness, in which the Divine panoply has not only to be put on, but to be used with skill and courage and ceaseless prayer. There is, perhaps, no part of his writings more valuable for Christian conduct than the last chapters of this Epistle. But all this comes in its right place, second and not first. The first thing is to understand what God has done for us, and how high our place in His purpose is. All this should be taught with as little reference as possible to our own actual imperfections. But when our minds are clear as to all this, we must go on to see how we are to respond to God, not only by the faith which takes Him at His word, but also by the faith which embodies it in practice. Here detail is necessary, and very practical directions. Now in all this St. Paul is a master. You will often find that those who deprecate much emphasis upon doctrine, and are all for ethical appeals, are in fact much less direct and practical in what they actually say than St. Paul himself. Though they insist upon Christian conduct, they leave us much in the dark as to what it actually involves.

I

Now it is not my purpose to-day much more than in the earlier lectures to deal with questions of detailed interpretation. I shall try, as before, to exhibit something of the unity of the Biblical teaching, to show you how natural to a Hebrew St. Paul's teaching is, and to point out its importance for ourselves. It is commonly held that our Lord has altogether transformed morality ; and that, while before He came it was a matter of obedience to a code of external rules, it is now for the first time an inward and spiritual thing, and all included in the great law of love. In other words, the Pharisees have again persuaded us that their view of the Old Testament teaching is correct. Now I would ask you to notice whence it is that this impression is derived. It is derived, I think, from a careless reading of the controversial epistles of St. Paul, and of that history of the struggle for Gentile freedom which we find in the Acts of the Apostles. But there are several things which we are bound to remember. In the first place, St. Paul had been himself a peculiarly conscientious and even scrupulous Pharisee, and it is with Pharisees that he is arguing in the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans. He speaks of the law, not necessarily as it was intended to be understood, but as he himself had understood it, and as his opponents understood it still. Because the Pharisees looked for their justification with God to a strict performance of detailed legal enactments, it by no means follows

that the Old Testament had taught them to do so. In the second place, St. Paul himself steadily maintains that the Old Testament had done nothing of the kind. What God had always demanded of His people was faith in His word, and an obedience resting upon faith. St. Paul claims, not a Divine authority to innovate but a Divine authority to return to the true lines from which the Pharisees had departed. Was he justified in his contention, or was he not?

Consider first the teaching of the Prophets. Were the prophets legalists? There is not a touch of legalism in the greatest of them, and only a touch in late prophets such as Trito-Isaiah and Malachi. The prophets are prophets of grace, like St. Paul himself. They are witnesses to the great things God has done for His people in the past, and to the great things that He will do for them in the future. Their characteristic demand is for faith. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isa. vii. 9). But the prophets are also prophets of judgment, and what is it that according to them calls for judgment? Is it inattention to the detailed enactments of the law, or is it unfaithfulness to their own redeeming God and disregard for the broad principles of mercy and justice? There can surely be no doubt as to the answer. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. vi. 8). "Cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the

widow" (Isa. i. 17). That is the characteristic moral teaching of the prophets. No doubt there is also ceaseless insistence upon the worship of the one true God. But what the prophets insist upon is that He and no other is to be feared and loved and worshipped, and not that it is of immeasurable importance that He should be worshipped with exact obedience to particular ceremonial enactments. When the scribe said to our Lord that to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, was much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifice, he showed an understanding of the best teaching of the Old Testament much greater than we sometimes show to-day.

But, secondly, let us consider the law itself. Was it in fact the burdensome system which we usually suppose it to have been? No doubt St. Peter speaks of a yoke, "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10). But it is with the Pharisees that he has to deal, and it is surely of the law as interpreted by the Pharisees that he is speaking. The question is whether they interpreted it rightly. It is true that the post-exilic sacrificial system was a very elaborate affair, but practically only the priests were concerned with it. If you have ceremonial worship to conduct, it is much less burdensome to follow full and explicit directions than to be obliged to arrange it yourself at the time; there is much less fuss about ceremonial in the Roman Church than in the English for that very reason. It is also true that the law contains a

list of unclean foods, and a certain number of other curious precepts coming down from far-off days. But these things were not really burdensome. It is no great hardship to refrain from ploughing with an ass and an ox together, and the temptation to boil a kid in its mother's milk is not overwhelming. If we would really study the moral precepts of the law, whether individual or social, we should find that they are exceedingly salutary, and not at all burdensome. It is, *e.g.*, an extremely good thing to be circumcised, a real help to sexual morality, while the Mosaic law as to the rights of the poor puts our own to shame. Though the Pharisees, primed with the lore of the Rabbis, might say that the multitude who knew not the law were cursed, the multitude probably knew as much of the law as it concerned them to know. If we look at the broad principles which it lays down, and at the great motives to which it appeals, we shall find that on the whole it is thoroughly in harmony with the prophetic teaching, and well deserves the encomiums which the writer of the cxixth Psalm gives to it. Imperfect the Old Testament teaching certainly is; our Lord had to complete it in more ways than one. But just because it was on right and permanent lines, it was completion that was needed, and not revolution.

II

What then, let us ask, are the grand abiding principles of theocratic or ecclesiastical morality, as we find them in the Old and New Testaments?

There is, firstly, the revelation of God's character, and the duty of God's people to imitate God. God is holy, and God is gracious, and therefore His people must be holy and gracious. "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2). That is the first great principle. It is this which comes especially into prominence in questions of private and personal morality. There are times when the great principle of love does not at first sight give clear guidance, though, if we think deeply enough, we may see that love is the fulfilling of the law even then. But holiness is sometimes a clearer and safer guide than love. Sometimes "to do the desires of the flesh" may not seem to harm others very seriously, but the principle of holiness is quite clear if only we will be honest with ourselves. Let us listen to the Apostle as he appeals to it. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard Him, and were taught in Him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

That is what the Hebrews had been told of old. They were not to defile themselves as the Amorites had done before them, and as the other Gentiles were doing still. "I am the Lord." "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, which is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no man deceive you with empty words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience" (v. 11, 12). You see; "as becometh saints." You are a consecrated people, and you must act accordingly. *Noblesse oblige.* Of old the man who committed abominations could not maintain his place in the theocracy: he was to be cut off from Israel. He has just as little place in the kingdom of Christ and God. The principle of holiness—at the bottom of our hearts we know what it demands. Argument about it is only "empty words." People—sometimes even priests—will defend artificial means of preventing conception, and appeal to the principle of love. Don't argue—assert. Be as rude as St. Paul. Tell the defenders of abominations that they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their hearts. The principle of holiness is here all that we require. And then love —universal love. The Old Testament at its highest

grasps the principle firmly. It is not enough to love our brethren in the Church. The Lord "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger" (Deut. x. 18, 19). So says St. Paul. "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for you" (Eph. v. 12). "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (iv. 31, 32). "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children" (v. 1). You see how clearly St. Paul follows the Old Testament lines, and how beautifully Christian faith enables him to strengthen the old appeal. God's own character is a greater motive to love than ever before.

That first, the character of God, especially as revealed in the work of Christ. And then our high calling in the Church. We are "saints," consecrated people; we have a place in the body on which God's purpose rests, and must rise to our position. That too is an old principle. Morality rests largely upon Churchmanship—upon our sense of what the Church is meant to be and to do. We have dwelt upon this before, and need not return to it. St. Paul appeals to this motive also. "I therefore; the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (iv. 1). We are always to remember that we are "in Christ" and have great obligations as

being so. Even children must remember it. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (vi. 1). Moreover, this membership in the Church brings special relationships one to another, which supply us with important moral principles. "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (iv. 25). "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need" (iv. 28). Beautiful reasons these for truth and for industry, far higher than any which the world knows. Let us not fail to point them out. We may not lie, because we are mutually dependent, and truth is necessary for the successful conduct of the common life. We must not idle, or we shall not be able to help others. And then humility between man and man, that noble virtue which the Hebrews, like the rest of the world, needed the Incarnation and the Cross to teach them. There is humility before God in the Old Testament, but little indeed of humility before men. But the Church—the Body of Christ—must hold together, and only humility will prevent division. "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (iv. 2, 3). The unity, that is to say, which the Spirit gives is no mere outward unity, through outward unity will follow it; what it requires is forbearance, and sympathy, and willingness to take the lower place. In a word, we

must have the mind of Christ and of God. That sounds a paradox, because we suppose that humility consists in a low estimate of ourselves, and God cannot have that. But humility does not really consist in a low estimate of ourselves; its home is the will, not the mind; it consists in service and sacrifice. Our estimate of our position and powers may be high or low; we should endeavour to think of both as truly as possible. But what matters is that, whatever our estimate of ourselves may be, we should be willing in practice to take the lowest room, and be ever ready for the lowliest service. God hates pride, not as the proud hate it in others, because it is an offence to their own pride; He hates it as Christ, His Image, has taught us, because it is an offence to His humility, because, having Himself shrunk from nothing that would help us, He expects to find the like spirit in us.

The character of God and our calling in the Church, these are the great foundations of Christian morality. But there are broad moral principles which we share with all the world, and St. Paul does not forget them. What a width of appeal there is in the words of another Epistle! "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8). In attending to the great Christian motives, do not forget that others still hold good.

There are; *e.g.*, such cardinal virtues as justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude. They were known before Christ came, but they can never be out of date; Christians must not allow themselves to fall behind others here. There is justice. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Eph. vi. 1). It is a matter of simple justice, if we consider what their parents have done for them. And then prudence. "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Be careful and accurate in the conduct of your life; there is a scholarship of living. Moreover, this world is not an easy world; opportunities must be watched for, and bought up with the zeal of a collector; we must make our collection of well-used opportunities as complete as possible. "Don't be a fool" is a thoroughly Christian maxim. God's will is concerned in our doing the right and sensible thing. Though He loves simplicity, He hates folly; and, as we see every day, punishes it with terrible severity. And then temperance. "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." St. Paul gives no reason for temperance, unless in the word "riot" there is an appeal to our Christian self-respect. Temperance, like justice and

prudence, has self-evident claims. What he does is to cut the ground from under the great motive for drunkenness. The object of excessive drinking is to get drunk; that, as the magistrate said, is "the nearest way out of Manchester." But St. Paul does not agree. The nearest way out of Manchester is to be filled with the Spirit of God. It not only lifts you out of it; it enables you to stay out of it, looking down from "the heavenlies" upon its smoke and grime, and drawing others out of it by the melody which you make with your heart to the Lord. The real reason why we fail to convert the drunkard is that the religion we offer him is no substitute for drunkenness. It is altogether wrong to be filled with new wine even at night, not to say in the morning (Acts ii. 13); but it is altogether right to have a religion so uplifting that it causes you to be suspected, until your abundant sanity is proved. Enthusiasm is a glorious thing, and everybody knows that it is. People dislike it in others, partly because it gives them a sense of inferiority, and partly because they are afraid that the enthusiasts will not let them alone. So we might go on, dwelling point by point upon St. Paul's teaching. How we need to study and to understand the moral teaching of Christianity to see what it is, and how closely it is bound up with Christian doctrine! We study Christian doctrine because we know that we shall know nothing about it unless we do. But we tend to assume that we all know what Christian conduct is. Nothing can be further from the fact. The moral conceptions of

Englishmen of all classes are as full of error as their religious conceptions. It must be so, since the two are bound up together.

III

But after all "morality" is too cold and passive a word; as St. Paul knows well, Christian conduct means the Christian conflict. It is a "wrestling" (vi. 12), and that not just against flesh and blood, but against "the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." We must have the armour—or, to use the wider and better modern word, the equipment—of God, or our overthrow is certain. You see, things are not really quite as simple as the second chapter may have suggested to us. "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience" (ii. 2), has not been as completely put out of action as we might have supposed. The Christ has conquered him, and is now beyond his reach; we have conquered him, in so far as we abide in Christ; if we are "strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" (vi. 10), all is well. But the struggle lies just there; all this cannot be taken for granted. Meanwhile the power of the enemy is very real, and we must be equipped and on guard.

Just a few words, in passing, as to the spiritual adversaries of whom the Apostle speaks. What was his real attitude towards the Hebrew beliefs

which lie behind his words? That is more than I can tell you. St. Paul was a very sensible man, and had no love for "old wives' fables" (1 Tim. iv. 7). It is very difficult to believe that he took quite seriously all the current Jewish lore about angels and demons. But I think that he took it more seriously than we do; perhaps, like St. Jude, he was too uncritical not to be imposed upon by such high-sounding titles as the Book of Enoch. I would suggest that his attitude somewhat resembled our own to-day towards the mythology of "Paradise Lost." We know that the presentation is imaginative; we do not nicely distinguish between one member and another of the Satanic court. But we do not believe "Paradise Lost" to be nothing but a product of imagination; great truths of experience lie behind it. We are really up against great and complex forces of a very sinister character, and they have certainly deprived us of a paradise which ought to be ours. Here too St. Paul may have something to teach us. This grandiose language about principalities and powers, whatever may lie behind it, has exactly the right emotional value. It makes us feel that we are up against something big, and sufficiently personal to arouse healthily our spirit of combat; it shows us that we cannot presume, and must cast ourselves upon God. But its large indefiniteness is helpful also. So I think it should be with our own teaching. In the past, the conception of Satan and of all unseen forces of evil has been vulgarised and made ridiculous. The *Ingoldsby Legends* have done serious harm, and

we must not be surprised if very good Christians sometimes decline to believe in the devil. But we should point out that moral evil, mysterious as is its origin, is certainly very terribly real, and that moral evil means, and must mean everywhere, evil will; it cannot exist except where there is personality and power of choice. Facts certainly suggest that it is not confined to man, and that we are in fact tempted by an evil will or wills that are not identical with our own. Of what nature precisely this evil personal action may be we do not know; to call it personal is not to say that the personality involved resembles our own. Probably we cannot go much further. We can trace the rise and transformation of the conception of Satan among the Hebrews if we like; Satan was at first comparatively respectable. But the real questions are, why did it arise, and why was the earlier conception found to be inadequate? Think out these questions, and you may see that the conceptions reached rested upon the facts of experience, though the imaginative presentation went far beyond them. The facts really do suggest that we are up against something quite intangible, but very malign. We must fight, and put on the whole equipment of God.

But now about this equipment. I hope that Dr. Robinson has convinced you that by the armour of God St. Paul means the armour which God wears, and that our people will hear less than in the past about the prætorian guardsmen in charge of St. Paul at Rome or the Syrian legionaries of Cæsarea.

Here as ever we should explain St. Paul's language by Hebrew thought, when that is possible. No doubt it is also the armour that God gives, but He gives no armour except His own. The great passage in Isa. lix. is the best starting-point; though it must be supplemented by others. It was a very "evil day" which called God to don His armour. "None sueth in righteousness, and none pleadeth in truth; they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch adders' eggs;" the serpent brood is everywhere. "And judgment is turned away backward, and righteousness standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and uprightness cannot enter." Who can deal with such a situation as this? "God saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was none to interpose: therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it upheld Him. And He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head" (Isa. lix. 4, 5, 14, 16, 17). God is going into action; there is no hope without Him. Did St. Paul's thought pass on to the Incarnation, and the great redemption that followed? It might have done so. We ourselves at any rate will think of them; nothing else is so illuminating as to the equipment of God. Our Lord wore it, and commends it to us. "There is none like that: give it me" (1 Sam. xxi. 9). How did he fight, and how must we?

"Stand therefore"—we are on the defensive at first—"having girded your loins with truth"

(vi. 14). In the East the girdle gathers up the flowing robes and gives ease and freedom of movement. "Let your loins be girded about" (Luke xii. 35). It is truth which gives this freedom, truth with ourselves, with our neighbours, and with God. Lack of perfect sincerity hampers us at every turn. Our Lord is the great Example. "Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God" (Mark xii. 14). He was true in Himself, and, like St. Paul, insisted upon His own truth. Those who say what is unexpected must always do that; for men often suppose that only truisms are true. He was honest and fearless with others, and taught the way of God just as it was. The teaching explained the life, and the life illustrated the teaching. So it must be with us all. Sincerity with ourselves, the refusal to pretend to ourselves that we are other than we are; sincerity with others, the refusal to adopt a pose, or to speak or act as if we were what we are only trying to be—that is what gives freedom of action. We can attend to our business because we have not to be continually upon our guard, lest we should be found out. And then righteousness. "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness." The fundamental meaning of righteousness seems to be the fulfilment of the just claims made upon us. We have seen the source of St. Paul's thought here. God's righteousness is the fulfilment of the claims which His covenant-people have a right to make upon Him; it is His faithfulness to His promises,

and so near akin to His mercy rather than something to be contrasted with it. With Him mercy and truth always meet together; righteousness and peace continually embrace. Carry that thought with you to the difficult places of the Epistle to the Romans. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, since He has promised to do so. So our righteousness is our fulfilment of the claims of God and man upon us. It is the breastplate, because it protects the vital organs and saves from sin unto death. So the Lord said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 15), and earned that title of the Righteous which St. Peter, St. James, and St. John alike give to Him. His action never seems to have been directed by abstract ideals; He simply fulfilled the claims which the will of God and the needs of men made upon Him moment by moment. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34). "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John xiv. 31). So also in His dealings with men. The apostles resented the claims which outsiders made upon Him —the claims of the sick, of the crowds, of the children. "Send them away." The Lord set Himself to fulfil these claims, and always seemed just to have time to fulfil them all. So it must be with ourselves. St. Paul makes much of the righteousness of faith, and naturally so. The first claim which God makes upon us is that we should take Him at His word. We are to believe the witness He has borne concerning His Son, receive what He offers, and

give what He asks. If we reject that claim, and call Him a liar, as St. John puts it (1 John v. 10), He has little interest in our fulfilling or pretending to fulfil others. But faith is practical; it must develop into the life of faith; and, since we are elect in Christ and members of His Body, we must act as the inheritors of His mission, and answer to all the claims which the Church and the world make upon us. The breastplate is of chain-armour, formed of a multitude of interlinked performances of our duty; it is heavy as breastplates always are, but it is a grand protection. Great falls may come by small neglects, which leave a hole in the chain-armour through which the enemy can thrust.

And then the preparation of the Gospel of peace —the soldier's boots. The Old Testament reference is plain, but the interpretation not very clear (Isa. lii. 7). Does St. Paul mean preparedness to preach the gospel, or that quiet confidence, that preparedness for all that may come, which the acceptance of the gospel gives? Perhaps the latter is the better interpretation. Only do not let us narrow the meaning of peace: the Hebrew "Shalom" seems to include well-being of every kind, and the context in Isaiah has far horizons. The Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of the Kingdom with all that it brings for us and for the world, the good news of the present kingdom in the Church and of the greater kingdom expected. We must be shod with the preparedness which its acceptance gives. The soldier's boots are almost as important as his weapons. In the long marches of the Christian warfare we must have that

certainty of ultimate victory which the gospel of the kingdom bestows ; our *morale* depends upon it. It was so with the Lord. He endured over stony ways because He saw the joy set before Him. He was calm and undaunted when the Apostles failed, because He knew that His Gospel of the Kingdom was true, and that He would enter upon His Kingdom. And His peace He left to us—not only His peace with God, so that we are accepted in the Beloved, but His peace in face of the future. We are assured of forgiveness that we may be assured of our place in the kingdom both here and hereafter.

The boots then, and next the shield. "Withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one" (vi. 16). St. Paul shows a characteristic enthusiasm here. Rightly used the shield never fails. But we should notice the change of tense ; it is the present, and not, as before, the past. The girdle, the breastplate, the boots, are put on for the day ; they are not moved when once they are in place. But the shield must be intelligently used, turned this way or that as we see the fiery darts upon the wing. But what faith does St. Paul mean ? Does he mean faith as an activity of the soul, or the faith as a body of revealed truth ? The former assuredly : I doubt if St. Paul ever uses the word in the other sense. There is nothing in the use of the definite article in the Greek ; abstract nouns commonly take it. But do not let us suppose that the one can be separated from the other. Faith in God and in Christ rests upon the facts known

about them, the facts which the Creed embodies; we cannot exercise faith in St. Paul's sense without the "faith" in St. Jude's, though the faith may not yet have attained a very definite formulation in our minds (Jude 3). Out Lord met all attacks, as we see, both in the wilderness and in the garden, with the appropriate form of trust, but the perfect trust rested upon perfect knowledge of God's character and purpose. So with ourselves. The shield is faith as an activity of the soul, but there is no right and fruitful exercise of it apart from knowledge of what God has done for us, is doing, and will do. On the other hand, we are not safe simply because intellectually we "hold the faith." Belief only affects conduct by arousing emotion and desire; if it is not sufficiently grasped by the whole personality to do this, it affects conduct not at all. Those who only hold "a form of sound words" with their minds may be ready enough to defend the faith, but the faith will not defend them; and to stand in front of the shield to defend it instead of behind to be defended may be "magnificent," but "it is not war." Let St. Paul's example explain his words. He possessed a very definite belief, and was always ready to provide an intellectual justification for it; but his whole life was the expression of faith in the deeper and more personal sense. In the ceaseless dangers and difficulties of his ministerial life he rested upon "the exceeding greatness of the power" (Eph. i. 19) and grace of God revealed in Christ; in the occasional temptations which he shared with other men he

doubtless turned, as he teaches the Ephesians to turn, to the truths most calculated to give help at the moment. The shield of faith is one, but it is gloriously emblazoned with the story of all that God in the past has done.

Thus far we have been dealing simply with defence. Is it so with the next directions? "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Common sense suggests that the helmet is for defence. But the connection with the sword is very close; our own salvation is regarded by St. Paul as something already bestowed; and above all we must remember that the phrase "the helmet of salvation" is quoted from Isaiah's description of the Divine armour, the meaning being that God goes out to save. God Himself does not need saving, but the helmet carries the crest, and the motto "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. xlv. 22). May we then take the helmet of salvation to mean that, having salvation ourselves, we are to labour with God for the salvation of others? God acts by His Christ, and Christ by His body the Church. His work for the world must be done through us. Let us consider our Lord. He always wore the helmet. The purpose of His coming, as we have seen, was not to found the Church, but to save the Church. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). His life was given to saving, and it is still given through His body to-day. But the Church to-day largely forgets the

helmet of salvation. It digs itself in, and refuses to attack; our deadly discouragement is the penalty of trench warfare. We speak of the need for a new baptism of the Spirit; but the Spirit is ours already, and we must stir it up, and use it. Development comes by use. "Arise and take up thy bed" (Mark ii. 9); the power will be given as we obey. But the great weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. The thought again comes from Isaiah: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked" (Isa. xi. 4). "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isa. xlix. 2). What is the word of God? Not the Bible as a whole. The expression is used in two senses. It may mean, first, the general Gospel message, the characteristic word of God to man; or, secondly, an individual or particular message of God to particular people at particular times. That is the great weapon of offence. Our word is futile; God's is living and powerful. Our duty is humbly to receive it, and faithfully to deliver it. Once more think of the Lord. He did not begin His work till the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him, and the great purpose of the Spirit, He said, was that He might preach good tidings to the poor (Luke iv. 18). The miracles were secondary; they illustrated the blessings of the kingdom whose coming He proclaimed, and so were aids to believing in it. And He always insisted that His message was not His own, but God's. The Father had given Him a commandment what He should say, and what He should speak

(John xii. 49). The matter and manner of His teaching were alike from God. So with ourselves. The great means of conversion is the Gospel. Faith comes by hearing. We have all been born as tiny unbelievers, and, if we are now anything else, it is to the word of God that we owe it. Every generation has to be won, and only God's word will win it. We must see that our preaching is indeed the word of God, and lead others to see it. "For this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13). That is the point. The Gospel is not a dead statement of truth, but a power which lives and works. We must learn afresh what the Gospel is—too often we do not know—and having learned, wield it like a sword. Study the Gospel sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, and see what they contain; we have many conceptions of the Gospel which the Scripture examples fail to bear out. Then, having learned "what we must say," we must seek to learn "what we must speak." We must "adapt spiritual words to spiritual things" (1 Cor. ii. 13), find through the Spirit the right expression for the truth entrusted to us. Once more we must remember that the word of God is often an individual message. Though there is a word for all, there is also a special word for each, if only we can find it.

But even this is not the whole story of the

Christian warfare. All will fail if we do no more than this. What then remains? "With all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. vi. 18, 19). St. Paul casts aside the thought of the Divine equipment here. It is not only that prayer is no part of the armour of God Himself; it is also that prayer is too great, too comprehensive, too universal an accompaniment of all that we do for any part of the soldier's equipment to provide a symbol for it. Each part must be put on, and kept in place, and used by prayer. And prayer itself is a complex thing—"with all prayer and supplication," it is needed "at all seasons"; and we must persevere in it with "all," with every kind of "perseverance." Above all it must be "in the Spirit," a real expression of that Divine life which is the life of the Ascended Christ. Christ prays, as He labours, through that Body which is His fullness or completion.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

S0-CBX-819